

Field Notes

In an effort to share some of the natural history observations made during the bottom trawl survey, we have requested that the Chief Scientists on each part of the cruise comment on some of the more interesting catches that were brought aboard the R/V ALBATROSS IV.

The first leg of the Winter Bottom Trawl Survey lost little more than one day due to bad weather at a time of year when storms are notorious for shutting down fishing operations. This stretch of good weather allowed this portion of the survey to complete 84 stations, an unusually high number compared to previous years.

Three stations this year had significantly large catches of Monkfish. At station 11 the largest Monkfish catch in bottom trawl survey history was caught at an average depth of 347 meters. 200 individuals ranging from 26 to 83cm weighed a total of 402.56kg. This is more than double the next largest WBTS catch, which occurred in 2004. Stations 17 and 19 also had significant Monkfish catches with 171kg and 99kg respectively.

At Station 16 a noteworthy Black Sea Bass was captured offshore. Measuring 61cm it is the third largest in survey history. Two individuals measuring 62 and 63cm were recorded in 1981.

Small Yellowtail Flounder were more abundant than usual offshore from Delaware to south of Nantucket Island. Individuals ranged from 6 to 48cm with the majority between 20 and 30cm. The highest concentrations were observed offshore of the eastern end of Long Island. It is interesting to note that many small Barndoor Skates were captured in the same vicinity, as well as directly south of Cape Cod. Twenty years ago catching a Barndoor Skate on a tow was a rare occurrence.

Bad Weather

Unusually long stretches of bad weather during the second leg prevented the occupation of a portion of the originally planned stations. Stations off southern New England included small barndoor skates. Smaller yellowtail flounder were also present.

Stacy Rowe
Chief Scientist
Survey Leg I
508-495-2021
Stacy.Rowe@noaa.gov

Dr. Wendy Gabriel
Chief Scientist
Survey Leg II
508-495-2213
Wendy.Gabriel@noaa.gov